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AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN HAITI

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-seventh year

Letter dated 9 December 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 5 December 1992 addressed to you by the Prime Minister of Haiti, Mr. René Préval, on the subject of the current situation in Haiti (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 22, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Fritz LONGCHAMP
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Letter dated 5 December 1992 from the Prime Minister of Haiti addressed to the Secretary-General

One year ago to the day, in my capacity as Constitutional Prime Minister of the Government of Haiti, I appealed through the United Nations to all Heads of State and Government of the States Members of the Organization.

Today, from the depths of the exile to which I have been consigned in my own country for almost a year and three months by the bloody military coup d'état of 30 September 1991, I come once again to make heard the voice of a people suffering in its determination to build, peacefully and armed only with its right and its Constitution, a nation in which freedom, justice and democracy for each and every man and woman become a reality and pervade the country's institutions.

More than 400,000 Haitians, compelled to flee their homes and their workplace, live in constant fear for their lives and those of their families. Indeed, at any time of day and especially in the night, unrestrained soldiers, armed with sophisticated weapons and assisted by the savage "tontons macoutes", terrorize, attack, beat, rape and kill with impunity children, women, young people, elderly people, farmers, city-dwellers, workers, lawyers, members of religious communities, and so forth - in short, citizens whose only crime is their lack of a weapon with which to defend themselves.

Yesterday, the day before and last week, hundreds of students were brutally attacked right on the grounds of the State University of Haiti, at the Damien Faculty of Agronomy and in several other faculties. The outcome was at least 60 wounded, several seriously, dozens of young men and women imprisoned and a dozen missing. As I compose these lines, two of the students who suffered at the hands of soldiers at Damien last Thursday have succumbed as a result of their ill treatment. The bodies of three students reported missing have just been found in the morgue at the State University of Haiti hospital.

This has been going on for 15 months! More than 5,000 people have been shot to death or have died from torture or ill treatment! Hundreds are missing! There have been more than 50,000 boat people, hundreds of whom have perished at sea and most of whom have been returned to their country where they languish with their families in fear and in unspeakable conditions.

And here we are on the eve of 16 December, the date on which, exactly one year ago, I wrote:

> "On 16 December 1990, the Haitian people enthusiastically held democratic and honest elections characterized throughout the Republic by massive voter participation."

Let us switch countries for a minute and go to Central America, to El Salvador. Thanks to the efforts of the United Nations, a rather unusual event has been unfolding over the past few days: weapons and military equipment are being turned in and destroyed by the very people who for 15 years considered those weapons and equipment to be their only recourse, the only means they had of forcing the regime in power to give way to law and democracy.

With the persevering assistance of the United Nations, the people of El Salvador have at last been allowed to see the dawning of hope for the prompt re-establishment of law and democracy in their land, so long wracked by war. Their path could be described as moving from violence to peace through armed violence.

Cannot the Haitian people, which has stubbornly sought the restoration of law and democracy through law and its Constitution rather than through armed violence, follow a different path?

The lawful and democratic State which the Haitian people overwhelmingly chose on 16 December 1990 with the help of the United Nations has been destroyed by the bloody assault on the legitimate and constitutional Government by the Haitian Army on 30 September 1991. During the 15 months that this aggression has continued, has not the resistance of the vast majority of the Haitian people, both inside and outside the country, demonstrated beyond a doubt the determination of that people to rectify, not by weapons or violence but by peaceful means, the insult done to law and democracy?

What, then, is stopping the United Nations, which did so much to enable El Salvador to achieve peace and democracy, even by means of armed violence, from coming to the aid of the Haitian people so that Haiti can re-establish peace and democracy without resorting to armed violence?

Is there a quota of dead, maimed, displaced persons or boat people which countries and peoples must meet before the community of nations needs to feel concerned? Does the international community's conscience have to wait until the television stations of the world show close-ups of piles of bodies or hundreds of thousands of sunken faces distorted by fear, suffering, hunger or disease before it can respond, or even be moved?

Is it possible that the United Nations would let the situation degenerate to the point that the Haitian people would feel compelled to follow a path it has thus far rejected, namely reclaiming peace and democracy by means of armed violence, only to be subsequently criticized for making that choice?

Such a choice can be avoided only if the United Nations uses every means at its disposal to force the handful of criminals who organize, control and maintain the repression to relinquish their ill-gotten gains by means of an effectively applied and scrupulously observed embargo aimed at cutting off their ammunition, weapons, fuel supplies and logistical support.

On behalf of a people that has chosen to be a martyr for freedom, by right and by democracy, I am asking you, Heads of State and Government, Members of the United Nations, to consider this vital question which I address today to the conscience of the international community, following the example of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Head of the Haitian State recognized by all Governments Members of the United Nations.

(Signed) René Préval
Constitutional Prime Minister
of the legitimate Government
of the Republic of Haiti